

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 220916Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6783

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY CAIRO UNN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 11712

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, ME

SUBJECT: REBEL SURRENDER "TURNING POINT IN MINDANAO OPERATION"?

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: MANILA 11347

SUMMARY: AGUSUT 22 PRESS GIVES LAVISH PLAY TO SURRENDER OF MNFL "FIELD MARSHAL" AL KALUANG AND FIVE COMMANDERS FROM JOLO (LOUTHERN LUUK). AL KALUANG IS WELL KNOWN DISSIDENT WITH TIES TO MNLF BUT HIS FIVE FIELD COMMANDERS ARE BASICALLY LOCAL PERSONALITIES. PRESIDENT MARCOS IMMEDIATELY AMNESTIED KALUANG AND APPOINTED HIM COMMANDER OF PARAMILITARY FORCE FOR SOUTHERN LUUK-SULU. MARCOS ALSO ANNOUNCED YET ANOTHER REORGANIZATION OF SOUTHERN MINDANAO AND APPOINTED MNLF DEFECTOR, JUDGE ABDUL HAMID LUCMAN (REFTEL), ASSISTANT REGIONAL COMMANDER FOR SUBREGION 9A. MNLF DEFECTORS TOLD PRESIDENT MARCOS NMLF LEADER NUR MISUARI IS NOW ALONE.

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MARCOS SAID THEIR DECISION TO JOIN GOVERNMENT "MARKS A

TURNING POINT IN THE MINDANAO OPERATION." AS USUAL, MARCOS RHETORIC OVERBLOWN BUT DEFECTION OF AL KALUANG AND HIS REPUDIATION OF NUR MISUARI DOES REPRESENT COUP FOR GOP, AND, IN RELATION TO PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY TUN MUSTAPHA IN SABAH, IS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN. END SUMMARY

1. IN CEREMONY AT MALACANANG AUGUST 21, PRESIDENT MARCOS RECEIVED SURRENDER OF AL HUSSEIN KALUANG, IDENTIFIED AS FORMER FIELD MARSHAL AND CHIEF OF SECURITY FORCE OF THE MNLF. JOINING HIM IN SURRENDER WERE HIS FIVE FIELD COMMANDERS: MULFRID SANGKUALA, ABUBAKAR JULY HASSAN, HADJI ELIAS JUNAH ABDULSALAM, MAGSAYSAY IMBING OF JOLO AND MUKSAN ATAP TAGID-ID. ALL OF THE MNLF DEFECTORS WERE IMMEDIATELY GRANTED AMNESTY BY PRESIDENT MARCOS. EMBASSY BELIEVES AL KALUANG HAS SAME STATURE IN MNLF BUT OTHER FIGURES ARE MINOR.

2. IN LETTER SUBMITTED TO PRESIDENT, THE FORMER REBELS SAID THEY HAD DECIDED TO JOIN GOVERNMENT SINCE MARCOS HAD ARTICULATED AND DEMONSTRATED "THE VERY THINGS WE WANT FOR OUR COUNTRY AND OUR PEOPLE." THEY STATED THAT THEY DID NOT WISH TO CONTINUE SENSELESS FIGHTING IMPOSED UPON THEM BY FORMER COLLEAGUES STATIONED ABROAD SINCE IT HAD BROUGHT NOTHING BUT DEATH AND DESTRUCTION AND SUFFERING TO THE MUSLIMS OF MINDANAO. THEY ALSO CONFIRMED NUR MISUARI'S INTENTION TO SECEDE FROM THE PHILIPPINES.

3. AT SAME CEREMONY, MARCOS APPOINTED AL KALUANG AS COMMANDER OF PARAMILITARY FORCE FOR SOUTHERN LUUK-SULU AND NAMED JUDGE ABDUL HAMID LUCMAN, A RECENT DEFECTOR, AS ASSISTANT REGIONAL COMMISSIONER FOR NEW SUBREGION 9A. PRESIDENT AMENDED PRESIDENTIAL DECREE 742 (SEE MANILA 9243), TRANSFERRING FROM REGION 10 TO REGION 9 PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND DIPOLOG AND DAPITAN CITIES. HE ALSO CREATED TWO NEW SUBREGIONS AND PROVIDED FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT REGIONAL COMMISSIONERS. SUBREGION 9A NOW COM-PRISES BASILAN, SULU, AND TAWI-TAWI. SUBREGION 9B COM-PRISES PROVINCES OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR AND XAMBOANGA, PAGADIAN, DAPITAN AND DIPOLOG CITIES.

4. PRESIDENT ALSO ORDERED RELEASE OF 62.7 MILLION PESOS
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FOR SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION OF MINDANAO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. PRESIDENT DIRECTED EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR; ADMIRAL ESPALDON, COMMISSIONER OF REGION 9; AND NEWLY-APPOINTED ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER LUCMAN TO SUBMIT PLANS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MINDANAO AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL MAYORS, FIELD COMMANDERS AND MUSLIM EXPERTS.

5. PRESS DESCRIBES PRESIDENT AS HEARTENED BY REBEL'S

DECISION TO EFFECT TO GOVERNMENT. MARCOS REPORTEDLY REMARKED THAT THEIR DECISION "MARKS A TURNING POINT IN THE MINDANAO OPERATION." PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HOPE AUGUST 21 MEETING WOULD BRING UNIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY BECAUSE "THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF THE REPUBLIC HAS COME FROM THIS AREA OF OPERATIONS."

6. PRESIDENT TOLD SENATOR MANSFIELD AUGUST 19 OF SURRENDER OF REBELS AND FACT MELCHOR WOULD GO SOUTH TO COLLECT THEM. PRESIDENT ASSERTED THAT UNSETTLED TIMES IN SABAH WERE DEMORALIZING REBELS AND IMPROVING PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER SURRENDEREES.

COMMENT: GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS IS REPORTING THAT BY HIS ACTIONS YESTERDAY, "PRESIDENT MARCOS GRANTED VIRTUAL AUTONOMY TO THE PEOPLE OF MINDANAO" THIS IS DOUBIOUS, AS IS PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT THAT CEREMONY "MARKS A TURNING POINT IN THE MINDANAO OPERATION." PRESIDENT'S OPTIMISM OVER IMPACT ON REBELS OF DIFFICULTIES BEING EXPERIENCED BY BUN MISTAPHA AND PROSPECTIVE TERMINATION OF MUSLIM REBELS ARMS PIPELINE DOES, HOWEVER, SEEM TO HAVE SOME BASIS IN FACT. BUT GIVEN HISTORY AND COMPLEXITY OF MUSLIM PROBLEM, WE SUSPECT PRESIDENT IS PREMATURE IN SPYING LIGHT AT END OF TUNNEL.
SULLIVAN

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